both nests the top is flaring and extends out to supporting twigs for an inch or more, the measurements do not include these extensions.

These three nests show peculiarities in shape and in the materials used that would seem to indicate a fixed purpose and design on the part of their builders rather than the result of chance. The wild oats used in the first two is unusual, even in small quantities, yet these birds chose it in preference to everything else, although other materials that satisfied other orioles were in abundance. Concealment seems to have been disregarded, in the first nest especially, for the large bulky structure of wild oats would be a rather difficult thing to hide in the foliage of a white oak and there seemed to be very little if any attempt at it. In the second nest the white bark of the sycamore and large lighter colored leaves made it more easy. In the third nest the fact that what were undoubtedly the same birds built a new nest a few rods away when this was taken, using the same sort of material and building a nest of the same shape and nearly the same size, and of the same fine weaving would show an individual preference that was as decided as it was remarkable. This second nest was not disturbed and the birds raised their brood in peace. I shall watch the locality with interest this season and if the same birds return I am sure I shall know them by their handiwork.

The Phainopepla.

BY M. FRENCH GILMAN.

THIS bird always possessed a fascination for me, though as a small boy, my interest and admiration were mixed with some awe and respect. His easy graceful flight, dignified bearing and hearse-like plumage and colors placed him above the common herd and it were nearly sacrilege to throw rocks at him. This immunity did not extend to the nest and eggs could I but find them. For a long time I sought in vain and began to think they were like the fabled birds of paradise, or like "Topsy." But finally a nest of young birds was found in July and the ice was broken.

There is a dignity and an air of mystery about the bird that appeals to one. His silky, jet plumage, graceful crest and flaming red eyes form a striking combination, and the revelation, as he flies, of the snow patches on his wings is rather startling. As a musician he does not excel, merely repeating at intervals a flute-like note, or when another bird interferes with him, uttering a rasping reproach.

The phainopepla makes his appearance in this vicinity about the 15th of May and remains until about October though stragglers may be seen along in November. I once saw one during a snow storm the middle of January, and he was still dignified though bedraggled. Many of them spend the winter in the mesquite thickets of the Salton sink and Conchilla valley--in and around Indio, Walters, Martinez and Toros. Here they feed on the pinkish berries of the desert mistletoe which infests so many of the mesquite trees. A few of the birds remain all winter at Palm Springs also, feeding on mistletoe berries and the pepper berries of which they seem very fond. A pepper tree with several of the phainopeplas clinging to

its long graceful branches, eating the pink berries, forms a perfect picture, the remembrance of which lingers.

In watching the birds during the breeding season I observed that many of them took no interest in domestic affairs, but put in much of their time consorting with such mixed company as house finches, western tanagers, and grosbeaks, in fig and cherry orchards where some of them met violent deaths. These loafers nearly all looked like immature birds, being less glossy and dignified, and I have since discovered they were nestlings of the season hatched in early spring in the Conchilla valley and at Palm Springs, and perhaps as far as the lower Colorado river country. This was surprising to me as the birds nest so late in the San Gorgonio pass, Warner's ranch and other similar points. In my notes I find the earliest date for a nest to be Banning, June 11, 1893. Fresh eggs at other dates noted were: Warner's ranch, June 12, 1901, Banning, June 23, 25, 27, 28, and July 4, 1893. Young birds can be found all through July, and in only two instances were eggs found prior to June 23. For a month after they arrive or until about June 15, they seem to have nothing to do but amuse themselves and look pretty.

From my desert notes I take the following data: Palm Springs, March 24, 1897, three new nests and a nest of young just ready to "fly the coop;" March 20, 1899, three new nests and a nest of young a few days from the egg; March 6, 1900, nest with two fresh eggs. At Toros I made notes as follows: March 19, 1901, a set of two eggs partly incubated and a nest of half grown young. From this data it would seem that most of the young are hatched in March and April and that in some instances nest building must begin in the latter part of February. Possibly some of the birds rear two broods a year, but from the fact that some adult birds fail to pair and nest in this vicinity, I am inclined to think but one brood is raised. Probably those hatched in March on the desert return there to nest the following March; while those hatched in the San Gorgonio pass, in June and July, nest there the following summer.

The nest is placed in a sycamore tree if one is available, but nests may be found in oak, cottonwood, willow, or mesquite trees. Two eggs is the usual set, though three are sometimes found. I have a set of three found at Warner's ranch and have record of three in set twice at Banning, one found by Nathan Hargrave and one by myself. The nest is saddled on a branch, and in shape and composition very much resembles that of the wood pewee, though larger in size. The male bird does much of the incubating, being seen on the nest more than half the time and exhibiting more solicitude for the home than does his mate.

The Significance of Trinomials.

BY WITMER STONE.

THE following comments were originally prepared as a communication at the Twentieth Congress of the A. O. U. They are presented here at the request of the editor of THE CONDOR, but have been somewhat modified in the interests of brevity and clearness.

Nomenclature is not a subject of much popular interest, but since the varied faunal conditions of California bring it constantly to the attention of the systematic zoologists of the State, the present publication may be warranted.